



The Kingdom of SAUDI ARABIA

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National Day Issue

National Day celebrating unity



National Day celebrates the final reunification of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by King Abdulaziz in 1932



Today we celebrate the legacy left by the founder of modern Saudi Arabia, Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman Al Saud, which has been honoured and upheld by successive kings who have successfully led the nation through a variety of challenges and changes.

On our 84th National Day (Hijri calendar), we recall the development of the Kingdom since reunification. The Kingdom has gone from a disparate array of acrimonious and divided tribes to a united country in which approximately 30 million find security, stability and the benefits of a thriving economy.

Under the leadership of King Abdulaziz and his sons, King Saud, King Faisal, King Khalid, King Fahd, and the current leader of the Kingdom, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah, the Kingdom has transformed an undeveloped area of desert and created a modern, developed society from scratch in less than a century.

Today, the Kingdom offers a highly developed infrastructure to support economic growth and investment, free public education and health care systems for all citizens, world class research and an extensive social services programme.

The Government under the prudent and wise leadership of King Abdullah, is dedicated to building a society based on the true teachings of Islam, whilst also confronting the forces of radical hatred and division.

With its consistent political stability, abundant energy reserves, and important position in the world, and guided by a foreign policy that focuses on Arab unity, Islamic solidarity and peaceful coexistence, Saudi Arabia is a strong advocate of peace, security and constructive cooperation throughout the world.



Message from the Prime Minister David Cameron on Saudi Arabia's National Day

“ I extend my warmest wishes to His Majesty King Abdullah, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, and to the people of Saudi Arabia as they mark the Kingdom's National Day.

Our two countries have a long shared history built on many years of friendship and cooperation. In areas as diverse as trade, education, energy, defence, culture and counter terrorism, we work closely to ensure the prosperity and security of both Kingdoms. Connections between our populations; pilgrims, students, businesses and visitors are strong.

Now, as violent extremists such as ISIL pose a threat to both our nations as well as to the wider region, our common goals are ever more apparent. As King Abdullah said in his recent Eid address, extremists who use religion as a pretext for violence are enemies of peace. The United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia will stand strong in the face of such threats, defeating the poisonous ideology of extremism, protecting the security of our nations and disrupting the flow of money and fighters.

The United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia share the same central objectives of a stable, prosperous region. I look forward to working closely with King Abdullah, his government and people to continue to increase our ties in the year ahead. ”



David Cameron

From the Ambassador

HRH Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf Al Saud



“ National Day is the time when we reflect on our hard-won unity and security. Our forefathers laid the foundations for the stability which we enjoy today. Looking to the future, we can take comfort from the past.

But we do not underestimate the challenges that face our country and the region, nor can we forget the sacrifices that are being made every day as the evil of terrorism stalks the surrounding lands. We honour and remember the victims so brutally murdered and send our condolences to their families.

The poison presented by IS and any other terrorists' network threatens Saudi Arabia just as much as it threatens the rest of the world – if not more.

The growing security responsibilities of Saudi Arabia in the region require rapid and substantial cooperation with the international community as highlighted during the recent conference on terrorism hosted in Jeddah.

A strategic long term plan to counter and defeat the poisonous ideology that is taking over minds is needed urgently. The Kingdom is ready and able to play its part as nations unite in their comprehensive fight against Al Qaeda and IS and the time for action is now.

Despite these huge challenges in the region, we in Saudi Arabia have this year seen ongoing economic growth in all spheres with new schools, hospitals and roads as we develop modern cities and universities which fit the needs of the 21st Century.

I am particularly proud of the thousands of young Saudi students who come here every year on the King Abdullah scholarship program to further their higher education qualifications and gain an insight into another culture and see first-hand where our interests and friendship converge. Today I will be handing out awards to 90 outstanding students who have completed their Masters and Doctoral degrees and now head back home to Saudi Arabia with their new qualifications.

Under the leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, the Kingdom is now preparing for the arrival of nearly 2 million pilgrims from across the world including over 20,000 from the UK.

Hajj is a time of prayer and unity and this year we hope that those prayers will bring us all closer together in understanding and help us in our search for a peaceful solution for our region. ”

Kingdom hosts regional security meeting on IS

In a top level meeting in Jeddah, hosted by Foreign Minister HRH Prince Saud Al-Faisal, ten Arab states agreed to join with the US government in an international coalition to fight against Islamic State extremists (also known as ISIL and ISIS).

Ministers representing Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain joined Prince Saud and US Secretary of State John Kerry. Mr Kerry said it was important that the meeting was hosted by Saudi Arabia as the Kingdom would be a key element in the coalition both because of its size and economic importance and because of its religious significance.

He said: "ISIL claims to be fighting on behalf of Islam but



the fact is that its hateful ideology has nothing to do with Islam. ISIL is a manifestation of evil, a vicious terrorist organisation that achieves its goals only through violence, repression and destruction, fed by illicit funding and a stream of foreign fighters."

Prince Saud said that it was vital that the international community unite in fighting the terrorist threat. He pointed out that the meeting in Jeddah followed an appeal to world leaders by Custodian of the

Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah in August this year.

Following the meeting and before leaving Saudi Arabia, Kerry was received by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah, along with Crown Prince Salman and other senior government ministers.

The joint communique:

"The ministers representing states of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and the United States declared their shared commitment to stand united against the threat posed by all terrorism, including the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), to the region of the world.

The participants hailed the formation of the new, inclusive Iraqi Government and expressed their support for the immediate steps it has pledged to take to advance the interests of all Iraq's citizens, regardless of religion, sect or ethnicity.

The participants resolved to strengthen their support for the new Iraqi Government in its efforts to unite all Iraqis in combatting ISIL and discussed a strategy to destroy ISIL wherever it is, including both Iraq and Syria.

The participants confirmed their commitment to implement UN Security Council Resolution 2170, and noted the Arab League Resolution 7804 of September 7th 2014, as well as the discussion of ISIL at the NATO Summit in Wales. The Ministers affirmed their strong commitment to continue the effort to eliminate global terrorism.

The participating states agreed to do their share in the comprehensive fight against ISIL, including stopping the flow of foreign fighters through neighbouring countries, countering financing of ISIL and other violent extremists, repudiating their hateful ideology, ending impunity and bringing perpetrators to justice, contributing to humanitarian relief efforts, assisting with the reconstruction and rehabilitation of communities brutalized by ISIL, supporting states that face the most acute ISIL threat, and, as appropriate, joining in the many aspects of a coordinated military campaign against ISIL.

Participants emphasized that the role played by regional states is central to this effort."



King Abdullah warns of global terror threat

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah has warned that terrorists will target the West if the world does not unite to confront them. King Abdullah made the statement during a presentation of credentials ceremony held in Jeddah in August for ambassadors to Saudi Arabia which included UK Ambassador Sir John Jenkins.

He told diplomats: "If neglected I'm sure they [the terrorists] will reach Europe in a month and America in another month."

King Abdullah called on the ambassadors to convey to their governments the importance of a united pledge to confront terrorism. "The evils of terrorism must be fought with force, reason and speed." He said that terrorists were not adhering to the true message of Islam and were ignoring the importance of the sanctity of human life.

His warning follows his recent statement calling on leaders and scholars of the Islamic nation to stand strong in the face of those trying to hijack Islam. "These groups have become an easy tool for the enemies of Islam who use them to terrorize and kill innocent people through the distortion of the holy text and interpretation of Islamic law to serve their ends."

British ambassador Sir John Jenkins said the Kingdom was witnessing a period of safety, security and stability despite the "phenomenon of violence, terrorism and bloodshed" in other parts of the region.

King Abdullah called for the establishment of an International Centre to combat terrorism more than 10 years



ago stemming from his firm belief that terrorism can be most effectively fought when nations collaborate. In 2005 Saudi Arabia hosted the counter-terrorism international conference in Riyadh during which the proposal for the establishment of the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre was unanimously adopted. King Abdullah has financially supported the Centre with donations of \$200 million.

Ambassador defends Saudi Arabia's firm stand against IS



Erroneous claims in the British media that the Saudi Government is in any way involved in supporting Islamic State (IS) militants have been condemned and refuted by HRH Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf Al Saud, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the UK.

In letters published in the Guardian and the Financial Times last month he said: "Let me make it perfectly clear. The government of Saudi Arabia does not support or fund the murderers who have collected under the banner of the Islamic State (IS). Their ideology is not one that we recognise, or that would be recognised by the vast majority of Muslims around the world – whether they were Sunni or Shia. Saudi Arabia seeks the defeat and destruction of IS and any other terrorist network.

"Under the leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah, we launched an initiative for dialogue between all religions and cultures in 2008 with the establishment of the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue in Vienna.

"Following an International Counter Terrorism conference held in Riyadh in 2005, the UN Counter Terrorism Centre

was established which has received financial support of \$200 million from our government.

"We have been and are fighting extremism within our own borders daily, indeed hourly.

"Firm action is taken against any imam who is found to hold extremist views and who tries to incite their followers to violence.

"We have passed laws and warned our citizens that they will be arrested and prosecuted if they attempt to join ISIS or any other international terrorist group, or take part in any of the conflicts raging in any region.

"We have done and will do everything we can to stop the spread of this corrosive poison in our country and region and encourage all other governments to do the same."

The allegations in the British press were surprising as they followed the publication of an official statement by the embassy in July:

"The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia wishes to emphasise, once again, that it does not and has not supported, financially, morally or through any other means, the terrorist organisation known as the Islamic State nor has the Kingdom supported any other terrorist network.

"Saudi Arabia has been at the forefront of combating terrorism both domestically and internationally. We urge the British and international media to take an in-depth look into the financial backing and organisational structure of this terrorist organisation, as well as to report the situation in the region objectively and fairly and to verify allegations before reporting them as fact."

Al Faisal: “Israel has no right to self-defence as an occupier”

The actions of the Palestinian resistance group, Hamas, cannot be equated with Israel’s mass killings, said Saudi Foreign Minister HRH Prince Saud Al-Faisal following an extraordinary meeting of the foreign ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) held in Jeddah in August.

Prince Saud said: “You cannot equate the actions of Hamas and Israel, either in scale or in substance. It is not fair, there is no way you can put the two together. How can you say that Israel has a right to defend itself when it is the occupier and you do not give the same right to Hamas?” he said.

“When Hamas fires rockets, it is considered a terrorist while Israel, which thinks it has the moral right to kill hundreds and thousands of Palestinians in response to one soldier, is not? Where is the justice?”

Prince Saud said Israel was an occupying force that had stolen the territory of the Palestinians. “Israel wants to destroy and kill an entire population so that it can steal more land. Israel does not have the right to self-defence as an occupier. There is no international law, that says an occupier has a right to self-defence.”

He said Israel must reach a peace agreement with the Palestinians if it is to survive as a nation. “Israel has to realize that peace is the only solution for its survival. As we see it, Israel does not shy away from taking its terror to any level in order to achieve its goals with total disregard for any laws, rules, religious edicts or humanitarian considerations.”



Prince Saud told OIC ministers that they must unite in confronting Israel. “Now is the time to act as one Ummah.” He said the Muslim world was like one body: “If one part is affected, the whole body is in pain.

“We need to stand united in confronting Israel. The enemy is taking advantage of our division. When Muslims shed the blood of Muslims, this makes us weak.

“When one country tries to expand at the expense of other, this creates division, dissension.”

He said that the world needed to be made fully aware that Israel could not continue its aggression against the Palestinians without paying a price.

OIC Secretary-General Iyad Ameen Madani stressed that the meeting had been called to take a stance that expresses the organization’s firm support for the Palestinian people’s rights and to exert all efforts to stop the bloodshed.

Donations

Prince Saud said Saudi Arabia had spared no effort in supporting the Palestinian cause in all international forums. \$500 million had been released through the Saudi Fund for Development as Saudi Arabia’s share for the reconstruction of Gaza.

This is in addition to \$300 million granted to the Palestinian Ministry of Health and Palestinian Red Crescent and the Palestinian Red Cross.

Iraq crisis talks with UK

Crisis talks on Iraq and the growing threat of terrorism in the region have been held between HRH Crown Prince Salman bin Abdulaziz, Deputy Premier and Minister of Defence and British Secretary of State for the Foreign Office and Former Secretary of State for Defence, the Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP.

The two ministers met in London in May and then in Jeddah in June to discuss the crisis in Iraq and the threat from Islamic State terrorists.

Following the Jeddah meeting, Philip Hammond said: “I have held constructive talks with His Royal Highness Crown Prince Salman to discuss the ongoing situation in Iraq that represents a threat to not just British interests but the wider security of the Gulf.

“We are urging our Gulf allies to do all they can to seek a political resolution in Iraq that is inclusive and resolute in defeating IS.”

Mr Hammond also held talks with government leaders in Kuwait and Qatar and the UAE.

“We remain committed to the security of the Gulf and want to reassure our friends and allies that we will do everything possible to support those who are working for a stable and democratic Iraqi state and to alleviate humanitarian suffering,” he said.

SPA said that the talks focused on ways to consolidate peace and security in the region.

Top Saudi military officers, including Chief of Staff Gen. Abdul Rahman Al-Binayan, Maj. Gen. Hussein Al-Assaf and Brig. Abdullah Al-Zagheibi, Saudi military attaché in the UK, attended the Jeddah talks.

The Prophet’s tomb will not be moved

Allegations by the British media that the tomb of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) is to be removed or destroyed are completely and utterly false.

The General Presidency of the Two Holy Mosques, the agency that manages the holy sites, has denied all plans to destroy or move the tomb.

The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia categorically rejects the veracity of these news reports.

The study – which made no such proposal – is the view of an academic and does not reflect the position of the Saudi Arabian government nor its affiliated agencies.

As the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, the Kingdom takes with utmost seriousness the responsibility of serving the Two Holy Mosques in the most noble of manners.

Saudi King issues defiant Eid message

A strongly worded Eid message, condemning extremism and calling for unity, was issued at the end of Ramadan by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah.

He urged the international Islamic community to work together to "guide" Muslims who have been led astray.

"It is shameful and disgraceful that these terrorists are doing this in the name of religion, killing the people whose killing Almighty Allah has forbidden, and mutilating their bodies.... They have distorted the image of Islam."

King Abdullah said: "The joy of this Eid would have been complete were it not for the harsh reality experienced by our Islamic nations in many parts of the world as a result of conflict.

"These conflicts would not have existed if the enemies of Islam and peace had not found a small group who went astray as a result of listening to them. The group has become an easy tool in their hands. They have used the group to terrorize and kill innocent people, and have distorted the texts, implications and interpretations of Islamic Shari'a Law to serve their own interests.

"The Muslim Umma should steadfastly strive to defeat the forces that are maligning the noble and kind image of Islam and harming the believers and their sons," said King Abdullah.



The King's message follows the issuing of a number of new anti-terror laws including designating the Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, the Al-Nusra Front, and the Houthis in Yemen as terrorist organizations.

King Abdullah stressed that it is the "duty" of the Muslim Umma to "guide" the "deviants" - a reference to those who follow Al-Qaeda's ideology - away from this ideology and towards true Islam.

"Islam has got nothing to do with these nefarious designs. God willing, we will have to collectively thwart the efforts of all those who want to transform security into fear and prosperity into poverty," he said. "We will guard our blessed country against the evil deeds of these deviant forces."

Palestine: international community watches in silence

He further called on the international community to help the Palestinian people. "We see the blood of our brothers in Palestine shed in collective massacres which have not excluded anyone and war crimes against humanity without any human or moral deterrence... All of this is happening while the international community is watching silently.

"This silence has no justification. It is not aware that it will lead to the emergence of a generation that believes only in violence, rejecting peace and believing in the clash and not dialogue of civilizations."

Prince Muqrin appointed as Deputy Crown Prince



Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah issued a royal order appointing Prince Muqrin bin Abdulaziz Al Saud as Deputy Crown Prince earlier this year while retaining his position as the Second Deputy Premier.

In an interview with Saudi Press Agency following the appointment Prince Muqrin said that his first priority would be to meet the needs of the citizens of Saudi Arabia.

Thanking the King for honouring him with the appointment, he said that he would follow and implement all initiatives taken by King Abdullah and Crown Prince Salman to improve the standard of living for Saudi citizens.

Speaking about the development of the regions Prince Muqrin said that regional governors represent the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, and they are responsible for implementing his directives and orders.

He said the Saudi National economy was the strongest in the region and that the government was working on diversifying income sources and expanding its economic base, at the same time increasing job opportunities for young people and enhancing cooperation between the government and private sector.

Security

On security he said the Kingdom had succeeded in countering terrorism and that the security services would not tolerate any breach of security which was essential to the stability, development and prosperity of the Kingdom.

He also highlighted the important role Saudi women are playing in the development of the Kingdom and said that the participation of women in the Majlis Al-Shoura would enrich its work. He supported the call by King Abdullah for a Union of Gulf States to be established on economic and security levels.

Prince Muqrin, 70, is the youngest surviving son of King Abdulaziz, the founder of the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Before being appointed as second deputy premier, he was the Director General of the Saudi Intelligence Agency and before that Governor of Madinah.

HRH Prince Khalid bin Bandar bin Abdulaziz was appointed in June as Chief of General Intelligence with the rank of minister.

Prince Salman and French President Francoise Hollande call for a united war on terror and peace in Gaza

The threat posed by Islamic State (IS) to global peace and stability was top of the agenda when Crown Prince Salman bin Abdulaziz, Deputy Premier and Minister for Defence visited Paris earlier this month for talks with French President Francoise Hollande.

He told the President and Prime Minister Manuel Valls: "Saudi Arabia realized the danger posed by terrorism to the international community from early on." He said this was one of the key reasons the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, had called for the setting up of an International Counter Terrorism Centre working under the United Nations.

Custodian Of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah has recently donated a further \$100 million to the UN Centre and now hoped that other countries would add their support in order to strengthen and make it "a major pillar of international cooperation to combat terrorism, which threatens global security and stability."

In response President Hollande emphasized France's support for establishing peace and security in the Middle East, "which has become necessary now more than ever since the Syrian crisis has moved to Iraq.

"France has decided to help Iraq at both the humanitarian and security levels, but this support cannot be effective without the formation of a government that represents all sects in order to avoid fragmentation of the country.

"France and Saudi Arabia have been clear concerning the seriousness of the Syrian crisis. Our two countries have called on the international community to intervene, but their call has not always been met. They support those fighting the dual brutality of Bashar Assad."

Palestine

In a keynote address at a banquet held in his honour at the Elysee Palace, Prince Salman also called for effective international efforts to stop the bloodbath in Gaza.

He said the Arab Peace Initiative, which was originally proposed by King Abdullah, was aimed at resolving the Palestinian issue and protecting their legitimate rights, including an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital.

The Crown Prince denounced the brutal and devastating Israeli aggression on unarmed Palestinians in Gaza, saying it was a clear violation of international charters and principles. "We urge the international community to shoulder its responsibility to ensure the protection of the Palestinian people from repeated Israeli aggression."

President Hollande said that France supported the Arab Peace Initiative, and that it was looking forward to working with Saudi Arabia to revitalize this initiative. He said France condemned the acts of violence against ordinary citizens in Gaza.

Friendship

During a series of meetings on a wide range of bilateral issues Prince Salman highlighted the strength of Saudi-French relations.

President Hollande said: "The links that bind us are political,



economic and financial, but they are also humanitarian, as several thousand French citizens visit Makkah and Madinah every year. In addition, the Institute of the Arab World recently hosted a beautiful exhibition about Hajj, which I myself launched. It enjoyed a resounding success.

Foreign Ministers meet



On the side lines of the visit to Paris by the Crown Prince, the Minister of Foreign Affairs HRH Prince Saud Al-Faisal met with French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius.

During the meeting, they discussed bilateral relations between Saudi Arabia and France and ways of enhancing and further strengthening cooperation between the two countries on regional and international issues including the current crises.

M. Fabius highlighted the importance the French government attaches to Saudi Arabia and the key and influential role the Kingdom plays both regionally and internationally.

Relations with China, India and Japan consolidated



lasting peace for the Palestinian people and peace in Syria and the region.

China

In China Crown Prince Salman held meetings with the President of the Republic of China Xi Jinping. Talks covered the strengthening of the strategic relationship as well as cooperation in the field of energy. The Chinese expressed appreciation for the prominent role played by Saudi Arabia in ensuring the stability of the world oil market.

During the visit Crown Prince Salman announced a \$10 million donation towards building Islamic and Cultural centres in China. The Crown Prince said: "This visit has embodied the depth of relations between our two countries and provided an opportunity to discuss all fields of cooperation in the interest of our peoples."

Official visits to China, India and Japan aimed at consolidating and strengthening international relations and understanding were undertaken in February and March by HRH Crown Prince Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. During all three visits joint statements were issued condemning terrorism, extremism and violence. All agreed they would like to see a just, comprehensive and



India

The development of strong relations between India and Saudi Arabia was highlighted by the Crown Prince during talks in India with President Pranab Mukherjee and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. The two sides stressed the importance of strengthening their strategic partnership and signed a memorandum of understanding on military cooperation.



Japan

Strong relations between Japan and Saudi Arabia were reaffirmed during Crown Prince Salman's visit to Japan.

An official communiqué said that bilateral relations would be enhanced as a result of the visit.

During his visit the Crown Prince was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Rights by Waseda University, in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and to the World.

UK visits to the Kingdom

Home Secretary

British Home Secretary, the Rt Hon Theresa May MP, visited Riyadh in March. She was welcomed by the Crown Prince HRH Prince Salman bin Abdulaziz, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence. During a meeting the two discussed security matters of common concern.

The Home Secretary also held a meeting with HRH Prince Turki bin Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, Acting Governor of Riyadh and the Undersecretary of the Interior Ministry Dr Ahmed Al-Salem.

Judicial Agreement

The United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia have signed a judicial agreement of cooperation and memorandum of understanding.

Minister of Justice Dr Mohammed bin Abdulkarim Al-Eissa and his British counterpart the Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, co-signed the agreement in Riyadh.

Foreign Office Minister

The Rt Hon Sir Hugh Robertson, former Minister of State at the Foreign Office, visited Saudi Arabia in February before resigning as a minister in July.

He visited the Majlis Al Shura and held talks with the speaker of the Al Shura Council, Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Ibrahim Al Al-Sheikh to discuss parliamentary relations between the two countries. Robertson highlighted the importance of these relations and praised the decision to allocate 30 seats in the Majlis to women.

Mayor of London

Lord Mayor of London, Fiona Woolf visited Saudi Arabia in February and held talks with her counterpart in Riyadh, HRH Prince Khalid bin Bandar bin Abdulaziz, Governor of Riyadh region.

British politicians visit Saudi Arabia

A delegation of MPs and Lords who are members of the British-Saudi Friendship group in the UK Houses of Parliament visited Saudi Arabia in February accompanied by their chairman Daniel Kawczynski MP. They held talks with HRH Prince Abdulaziz bin Abdullah bin Adulaziz, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and with Dr Mufrej Al-Hagbani, Deputy Minister of Labour.

Saudi-British Relations workshop

The first ever 'Saudi-British Relations' workshop was held in Riyadh in April. The workshop was organized by the Institute of Diplomatic Studies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in association with the British Royal Institute of International Affairs at Chatham House. The event was opened by the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Bilateral Relations Dr Khalid bin Ibrahim Al-Jandan. Baroness Emma Nicholson, Chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Foreign Affairs attended.

The elephant tusk that could alter opinion on climate change



A 300,000 year old giant tusk of a now extinct elephant, found embedded in the vast sands of the Nefud desert, could have implications for world opinion on climate change as it confirms that the desert was once a much greener and lush place.

The tusk was found by a joint international research team of 30 archaeologists and experts from Oxford University working with the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities (SCTA) headed by HRH Prince Sultan bin Salman.

The implications the discovery has on thinking on climate change was the focus of the two day Green Arab Conference held in Oxford in April this year and opened by Prince Sultan.

In a specially recorded message, HRH the Prince of Wales said the Green Arabia conference was of the greatest importance. "This conference will help people understand and appreciate the heritage and long standing contribution of the culture and civilisations of the Arabian Peninsula."

He said that the discovery that the desert was once much greener and wetter would influence thinking on the effects of climate change. "It is crucial we understand how climate change affected the past so we are better able to address the future."

"And it is paramount that to do this we build partnerships between disciplines and between people around the world. It seems that climate change is one of the challenges that will define our generation and probably our civilisation."

Prince Charles said he was particularly pleased that the Palaeodeserts Project was a collaborative venture between Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom "with archaeologists and scientists from both countries working together."

In his introductory talk Prince Sultan gave the conference an overview of the longstanding heritage of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its importance both in relation to contemporary life in the Kingdom and in relation to the world outside Saudi Arabia. Highlighting the recent findings in the desert he said: "We want history to speak, to be a living history."

Prince Sultan pointed out that there had been huge investment in the Kingdom in archaeological exploration and restoration and in reviving and restoring museums. "But we are not just restoring museums, we are reinventing the way we look and learn about things. We want to make our history part of today. Saudi Arabia is in the eye of the world, at the centre of world affairs, and our culture is something we are very proud of."

The Green Arabia conference was held at St John's College, Oxford and organised by Professor Michael Petraglia, Professor of Human Evolution and Prehistory at the university and Principal Investigator of the Palaeodeserts Project which made the discovery.

The tusk

The two pieces of excavated tusk measure 2.25m (7.4ft) and are believed to have belonged to an extinct species from the Pleistocene era, known as *Palaeoloxodon*. Based on the creature's carpal bone, discovered 5m away, scientists estimate it weighed 6-7 tonnes (13,300-15,400lbs), compared to 3-6 tonnes for a modern-day African elephant. They put its height at more than 3.6m (11.8ft) at the shoulder.





In the same sand layer as the elephant's tusk researchers have found the remains of an extinct jaguar, oryx and a member of the horse family. Prof Petraglia said the discovery of the tusk was part of a huge paleontological find, with fossils extending for a whole kilometre along the margins of an ancient lake. Most excitingly, he said stone tools were discovered around the edges of the site and were believed to be signs of early human life.

"The discovery of the elephant tusk is significant in demonstrating just how much the climate could have changed in the Arabian Desert. Elephants would need huge quantities of roots, grasses, fruit and bark to survive and they would have consumed plenty of water too. Although the sand dunes in the Nefud Desert carry on for miles in the present day, indeed across an area the size of England, around 325,000 years ago it seems the landscape would have been very different."

First of many

He said that the find was expected to be the first of many. "Using satellite technology to map out the terrain, we predict there are tens of thousands of unknown archaeological sites in the Arabian Desert," said Professor Petraglia. "There are over 7,000 [dried-up] lake beds on the peninsula, most in Saudi Arabia."

The five-year "Palaeodeserts Project" is funded by the European Research Council.

Prince Sultan has personally supported the Paleodeserts Project. He and Professor Ali Ghaban, Head of Antiquities at SCTA, have been involved in approving the archaeological work undertaken by the research team.



Historic Jeddah a world heritage site

Historic Jeddah, the gateway to Makkah was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in June, joining a prestigious list of sites of cultural and historic interest listed by UNESCO around the world.

"Historic Jeddah is situated on the eastern shore of the Red Sea. From the 7th century AD it was established as a major port for Indian Ocean trade routes, channelling goods to Makkah," said a UNESCO statement. "It was also the gateway for Muslim pilgrims to Makkah who arrived by sea. These twin roles saw the city develop into a thriving multicultural centre, characterized by a distinctive architectural tradition, including tower houses built in the late 19th century by the city's mercantile elite."



Jeddah was one of 26 new sites added to the UNESCO list in June, bringing the total number of World Heritage Sites to 1007 in 161 countries.

The application for approval as a World Heritage Site was made to UNESCO by the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities (SCTA) in coordination with Jeddah municipal authorities.

HRH Prince Sultan bin Salman, President of the SCTA said: "The UNESCO decision will further highlight the Kingdom's historical position and its rich heritage. The inclusion of another site by UNESCO shows the depth of the Kingdom's culture."

He highlighted the initiative to preserve Saudi Arabia's heritage under the King Abdullah Project which has been recently approved by the Cabinet. The SCTA hopes that the inclusion in UNESCO's world heritage list will support its plans to restore the historic centre of Jeddah as well as to highlight its important heritage and encourage owners of property in the area to preserve and protect their buildings.

Through development of the historic area, the SCTA aims to preserve, rehabilitate and develop it architecturally, culturally and economically in a sustainable manner and highlight its heritage, urban and cultural features.

Investors inspired by first London forum

More than 200 potential investors and businessmen gathered in London in May at the first ever Saudi-UK Investment Forum. The huge opportunities in healthcare, IT, transport, logistics, construction and, engineering were outlined by a wide range of experts from the Kingdom and the UK.



The conference was opened by the Ambassador HRH Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf Al Saud who spoke of the close historic ties between Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom: "I hope that this Forum will further inspire and consolidate the strong economic and investment relationship that exists between our two Kingdoms.

"Under the leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, Saudi Arabia benefits from a strong free economy and a stable and progressive government.

"Our Kingdom is the 14th largest country in the world and our abundance of natural resources has enabled us to become one of the fastest growing economies. The World Bank has listed Saudi Arabia as one of the most business friendly nations in the world. To grow we need to diversify and to do that we need partners like you."

The Ambassador highlighted the friendship between the UK and Saudi Arabia and the role played by the embassy in developing and maintaining a political and cultural friendship between the two Kingdoms: "Friendship is the bridge that leads to better understanding and that can only lead to better business.

"Our job at the embassy here in London, is to help develop that bridge; that important, wider, bilateral relationship. The Embassy actively encourages cooperation between Saudi Arabia and the UK not only in business but also in culture, education, health and politics.

"For the business community, we hope to be pivotal to the work being initiated and carried out by organisations like the Saudi Chambers of Commerce in the Kingdom and the Arab British Chamber of Commerce in London. These are independent organisations that help to facilitate business

between us. They have recently established a joint not-for-profit Arbitration Partnership.

"The establishment of an Arbitration Centre in Saudi Arabia has now been approved by the Kingdom's Council of Ministers."

He said he hoped the Forum would encourage more investors to come to Saudi Arabia at a time of growth and opportunity.

Giving a keynote speech to the Forum, HE Abdullatif Al-Othman, Governor of SAGIA outlined the opportunities in Saudi Arabia as the Kingdom continued its "unprecedented transformation from a simple economy to a G20 country."

Euromoney chairman, Richard Ensor, then held on stage interviews with leading British investors who spoke of their experiences in the Kingdom. Robert Gray of HSBC said: "To be successful you need to be local and international and the quality of staff in the Kingdom enables that."



Dr John Sfakianakis of MASIC outlined the stability of the Kingdom and said that underpinned an investment program of nearly \$400 billion.

The Forum continued with panel discussions and presentations on four areas of investment looking at: opportunities in rail, metro and other projects; the development of technology; opportunities in healthcare and finally the structure of the Saudi British Economic Offset Program.

A Gala dinner was held at Kensington Palace to celebrate the launch of the Investment Forum. A second Forum is already being planned for next year.

Saudi flies to Manchester

Saudi Arabian Airlines launched direct flights from Jeddah to Manchester in April.

The flights, on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays are in response to demand and increased business between the Kingdom and the North of England.

A spokesman for Saudia said the flights would help to meet travellers needs and were part of the airline's aim to widen its network of international flights.

As well as serving business travellers, it is hoped the flights will serve Muslims living in the region who wishes to perform Hajj and Umrah and the growing number of Saudi students studying at Manchester University and other universities in the region on the King Abdullah Scholarship programme.



Prince Charles visits Saudi Arabia

HRH the Prince of Wales made a three day visit to Saudi Arabia in February, his 10th trip to the Kingdom since his first official tour in 1986.

During the visit he met the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah. He was greeted on arrival by HRH Prince Muqrin, the Second Deputy Premier and held meetings with him and with HRH Prince Saud Al-Faisal, the Foreign Minister to discuss regional issues of mutual interest including concerns about Syria and Palestine. HRH Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf, Ambassador to the UK attended the meetings.

Commenting on the trip, Sir John Jenkins, British ambassador to Saudi Arabia said, "The Prince of Wales' return to the region only a year after his last visit demonstrates the importance the British government places on its association with key partners in the area. It is testament to the importance attached by the



British government to strong existing relations with Saudi Arabia; a long-term relationship based on mutual respect between the two countries."

He added: "Ensuring continuity of personal relationships is essential for us, especially if we are to understand each other better. The visit is the embodiment of our desire to establish communication between officials of the two countries at the highest levels and our determination to preserve the personal nature of the relationship.

"In a time of turmoil in the Middle East which is dotted with most types of suffering humanity, particularly those taking place in Syria today, the visit of the Prince of Wales highlights his support to the principle of inter-faith understanding and dialogue between communities as a necessity, something that King Abdullah is also deeply concerned about."

Saudi Arabia's national football team in UK



The Kingdom's top football players were in London earlier this month to take part in a friendly match with the Australian team prior to the Asian Cup which is to be held in Australia in 2015. They were accompanied by HRH Prince Abdullah bin Musaad bin Abdulaziz, General President of Youth Welfare.

During their visit, the Ambassador, HRH Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf held a reception at the embassy in honour of Prince Abdullah bin Musaad and the team.

He wished them well in their endeavours.

\$1 million donation to Human Rights Commission

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia donated \$1 million to the High Commission for Human Rights in March as part of its continued voluntary support for United Nations organizations.

The donation was announced during a meeting between Dr Bandar Al-Aiban, President of the Human Rights Council of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay in Geneva. Dr Al-Aiban was leading a delegation to Geneva to take part in the Human Rights Council.

The two men discussed ways of furthering cooperation. Dr Al-Aiban stressed the concern of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah, and the Saudi Arabian Government for the ongoing suffering of the Syrian people.

The High Commissioner expressed her thanks for the Kingdom's supportive position towards human rights issues.

King orders measures to protect Kingdom



The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz has issued a Royal Order calling for measures to be taken to protect the Kingdom's national security in the face of regional turmoil, especially in Iraq.

Anticipating that terrorist organisations or others might carry out attacks in the Kingdom, King Abdullah ordered that all necessary measures be taken to protect the country.

The King has also launched Phase 1 of a border security project.

The project will see the establishment of eight command and control centres along the Saudi border with Iraq staffed by more than 4,000 security officers. Riyadh will also establish 32 debriefing centres where suspects seeking to

infiltrate the country can be questioned. The project also includes the establishment of three highly-trained rapid response units which will be able to deal with events as they unfold on the ground.

Saudi Arabia will also erect 38 communication and 40 surveillance towers along its borders, in addition to establishing an additional 85 surveillance posts. The project will see the deployment of 50 24-hour surveillance cameras and the laying of 1.4 million meters of fibre optic cable to assist in communication.

Saudi Border Guards' spokesman General Mohammed Saad Al-Ghamdi stressed that the Kingdom's northern border with Iraq is secure, highlighting the state-of-the-art security and surveillance equipment that has been deployed there.

Over the past year, multiple arrests have resulted in convictions on terrorism related charges. The Ministry of the Interior recently announced a further 88 arrests of individuals planning terrorist action both at home and abroad.

King Fahd Academy's new hall opened by Ambassador



The Ambassador, HRH Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf Al Saud opened the Al-Mansour Gallery, a new event and lecture space which can seat up to 250 people, at the King Fahd Academy in London in March.

Addressing the students, the Ambassador thanked them for their welcome and assured them of his ongoing support for them and for the Academy.

The Ambassador is Chairman of the Council of Trustees of the Academy which is an independent International Baccalaureate World School.

The King Fahd Academy offers a bilingual education with an Islamic ethos to students aged 3-19 years.

It was founded in September 1985 with the objective of providing schooling of the highest standards, equally acceptable to both Saudi and British Authorities.

Grand mufti condemns terrorists

The Grand Mufti Abdulaziz Al-Asheikh has warned young men against perverting the concept of "jihad" (struggle) and wreaking havoc in Muslim countries by killing innocent civilians in the name of Islam.

He urged young Muslims not to become victims of the rhetoric propagated by terror groups. "We witness ugly crimes on television that have been perpetrated by the enemies of Islam. These sects shed blood for no reason and kill fellow Muslims in the name of Islam, but what they are doing is nothing but organized terrorism."

He said that it was in the interests of all Muslims to live in peace and security: "Murdering innocent people not only distorts the religion's image, but places great distress on the families of these victims."

Islamic law abhors bloodshed. "The Qur'an asserts that 'whoever kills a believer intentionally shall abide eternally in Hellfire'," said Al-Asheikh. "God likens unjust killing to polytheism, while the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) included murder in the list of seven deadly sins," he reminded Muslims.

Holy Mosque Library Project

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud has approved the establishment of a new Holy Mosque Library in Makkah as part of the King Abdullah Historical Expansion project. The library will be re-established within the vicinity of the Holy Mosque.

It is hoped that the new library, with a collection of some 20 million books, will become established as a scientific and cultural centre. It will include an exhibition area and museum as well as a gallery, auditorium and a reading hall for visitors.

Duke of York visits embassy

HRH The Duke of York attended a reception at the London Embassy earlier this year hosted by the Ambassador, HRH Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf in honour of the visiting Minister of Commerce and Industry, HE Tawfiq Al-Rabiah.

The reception followed a meeting of the Saudi-British Joint Committee, held under the co-chairmanship of Dr Al-Rabiah and the Rt Hon Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, former Minister of State at the Foreign Office as well as a meeting of the Saudi-British Business Council.

Addressing guests, Prince Mohammed praised the joint committee's works to promote and enhance economic and commercial relations and investments between the two



Kingdoms. The Ambassador said he hoped the meetings would contribute to promoting bilateral commercial relations between the two countries, pointing to the onus of asserting the Kingdom's commercial, economic and financial clout.

Guests included senior businessmen, diplomats and Saudi and British officials.

In a statement to the press Dr Al-Rabia'ah praised growing commercial and investment

bilateral relations between the two Kingdoms. He said that the Kingdom had the tenth largest economy in the world worth \$745 billion. He urged international investor to take account of the Kingdom's healthy economy which had doubled in the last ten years.

Riyadh metro work begun

Work has begun on a Metro system for Riyadh which it is hoped will revolutionise transport in the capital city.

The \$22.5 billion Riyadh Metro project was launched in April by Riyadh Governor HRH Prince Khaled bin Bander Al Saud and is expected to take four years to complete.

Prince Khaled said that the metro would improve the quality of life in the capital city.

"Of course there will be traffic delays while implementing this huge project and I request the people of Riyadh to bear with us. We'll do everything possible to facilitate traffic."

In all there will be six colour coded lines on the Metro network covering 176.7 miles of track. Some 73.4km of the new metro rail system will be underground in the most densely populated areas of the city which suffer from serious traffic congestion

Digging work started in five places including the site for the proposed metro station at King Khaled International Airport, Al-Olaya Station, the metro control centre and the railway maintenance station. The airport station will be located at the fifth terminal, which is currently under construction. Al-Olaya Station, covering an area of 28,000 square meters, will have shopping centres, service facilities and car parking areas. It is designed to serve 400,000 passengers daily.

Work is being undertaken by three construction groups. The Fast Consortium, led by a Spanish construction group will build three of the lines - the orange, yellow and purple - totalling 73km of track, in a deal worth \$7.82 billion. They will also construct a fleet of 69 driverless trains. The Arriyadh New Mobility Group (ANM) will construct the 40.7km Red Line from Madinah Road to Prince Saad bin Abdul Rahman Road in a contract worth \$5.21 billion. Finally, the Bechtel-led BACS consortium will build the 39km Blue Line from Olaya Street to Batha Street and Al-Hayer Road, and the 25km Green Line along King Abdullah Road on a contract valued at \$9.45 billion.

According to FCC, the construction of the network will require 600,000 tons of steel, 4.3 million cubic meters of concrete, and will employ more than 30,000 people.



Manchester to exhibit Princess Alice photographs of Saudi Arabia



Journey of a Lifetime, the exhibition of photographs taken by HRH Princess Alice during her ground-breaking visit to Saudi Arabia in 1938, is to go on display in Manchester Central Library from 3rd December.

Princess Alice was Queen Victoria's youngest granddaughter and the first European royal to visit Saudi Arabia.

The photographs chronicle the journey she made across the Kingdom.

The collection belongs to the King Abdulaziz Public Library, Riyadh.



National Day Celebrating Unity and Remembrance

**“The evils of terrorism
must be fought with
force, reason
and speed.”**

**Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques,
King Abdullah**

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